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LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Co HERE
Critical Heritages: performing & representing identities in Europe

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- Populism is often used pejoratively to criticize politicians and their supporters for deploying politics of fear; authoritarian political tone; and undemocratic discursive elements;

- The main drivers of right-wing populist movements and their wide support are social-economic deprivation and/or nostalgic deprivation experienced mainly by parochial, immobile, working-class, underclass, traditional middle-class groups who feel challenged by the flows of globalization;

- Right-wing populism is not only driven by anti-globalist, anti-establishment, and anti-elitist sentiments, but also mobilized by populist political style;

- Populist political style is characterized by a leadership investing in societal and political polarization (Manichean world view which is centred on dualism); in myths and heritage to flatten the complexity, the nuance, the performative contradictions of human history; in ordinariness as well as unordinariness of personalities of leaders; in political incorrectness to give the impression to his/her followers that s/he is equal with the people s/he represents; in speech acts that scandalize, dramatize and exaggerate social and political phenomena; and in constant state of crisis;

- Right-wing populist political style also frames societal and political cleavages as cultural, and religious divides which leads to a civilizational approach between the Christian west and the Muslim east;

- The divide is not between the crescent and the cross; the divide seems to be between the seculars, atheists, agnostics, and liberals on the one hand and the Muslims on the other; which stems from the perceived homogeneity of the "other" (outgroup homogeneity);

- Right-wing populism is escalating in a period when global financial crisis and refugee crisis simultaneously intensifying because populist party/movement supporters are socio-economically disadvantaged by the increasing competition with refugees;

- One should also bear in mind that populism is not the sources of the problems we are all facing now in Europe, but it is the outcome of the failure of mainstream political parties that could not deliver enough to cure the ills of contemporary societies. In other words, contemporary right-wing populism is partly the critic of neo-liberal governance which fail to address the problems of the "periphery";

- One should not also forget that the main tropes of right-wing populism, i.e. civilizational rhetoric, Islamophobia, and are the remnants of the war in the Balkans in 1990s that gave birth to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' paradigm; September 11, which epitomized growing Islamophobia; and the multiculturalism bash made by mainstream politicians in Europe in 2010 such as Angela Merkel, David Cameron, and Nicola Sarkozy. In this sense, populist movements and their supporters perceive multiculturalism as a failed experiment;

- Right-wing populism in Europe is **mainstreaming** itself by highlighting a civilizational, liberal and culturally Christian discourse; Right-wing populism in Europe is

  a. civilizational, EUsceptic (but not necessarily Eurosceptic), and anti-Islam;
  b. resorting to *welfare discourse* to appeal to working-class and unemployed populations;
  c. making **new political alliances** with middle classes, women, LGBTI, and Jews,
  d. promoting a **culturalized Christianity** to appeal to those in search for community to fight back against the perils of globalization, and
  e. highlighting **liberal values** such as free speech, gender equality, philosemitism to appeal to new groups;

- Right-wing populism in Europe is far more different from **earlier extreme-right movements** as the current forms of populism are anti-elitist and diverse in terms of their ideological content;

- **Islamophobia**, or anti-Muslim racism, is the most popular instrument used by right-wing populist parties in Europe to mainstream themselves;
- Islamophobia is mostly visible in **remote**

cities and **rural spaces** where there are practically no Muslims in the public space because populism is a localized phenomenon which draws on the fear of the unknown/unfamiliar cultures. Those who are with a lower-education level, unemployed, male, nationalist and non-religious as well as those who rely on the mainstream media are more likely to be Islamophobic;

- Islamophobia becomes a **mainstream discourse** employed by those who are feeling socially, economically, politically and nostalgically deprived in real and/or relative terms to express their problems in everyday life. Such individuals are also aware of the fact that speaking from the margin makes more echo;

- Right-wing populist parties are very much capitalizing on the feeling of "**being left behind**" of many people all around the EU. AfD is investing in such a mood in Germany to mobilize masses against the shortcomings of the German political parties in the centre while the other European right-wing populist parties are investing in the feeling of popular discontent against Germany, which mainly springs from Angela Merkel's austerity policies (as in Greece), or from the fact that Germany has been the net winner of global financial crisis since 2008 (as in France, Italy, and the Netherlands);

- Populist rhetoric creates **new communities of sentiments** to fight back against detrimental effects of globalization, EUization, multiculturalism, diversity, unity, and cosmopolitanism;

- **EUization** is distinct from Europeanisation in populist discourse because the former is seen as an institutional integration model devoid of the public's voices;

- Populist rhetoric instrumentalizes **heritage as a form of governmentality** to mobilize and consolidate its supporters to promote authenticity and nativity, to fight against the *foreign infiltration,* and *to maintain the identity of European nations.*

- Right-wing populist discourse is not simply standing at the right end of the political spectrum, but also manifesting **environmentalist**, **welfarist**, anti-globalist, and leftist claims; which stems from the fact that populist rhetoric is becoming a political communications style;

- Supporters of the right-wing populist parties do not necessarily have **anti-refugee sentiments**, they are on the contrary empathetic towards them as they resemble the victims of the World War II in their collective memory. However, the same supporters generate very strong negative **sentiments against the settled immigrants** and their descendants as they see them as their competitors struggling for the same resources;

- Populist parties and movements emphasise the protection of national culture and heritage in the name of preserving national identity; which is characterized by an **increasing nativist rhetoric**.

WHAT IS COHERE?

RESEARCHERS EXPLORE WHAT MAKES US FEEL 'EUROPEAN'

The CoHERE project seeks to identify, understand and valorise European heritages, engaging with their socio-political and cultural significance and their potential for developing communitarian identities. CoHERE addresses an intensifying EU Crisis through a study of relations between identities and representations and performances of history. It explores the ways in which heritages can be used for division and isolation, or to find common ground and 'encourage modern visions and uses of its past.' The research covers a carefully selected range of European territories and realities comparatively and in depth; it focuses on heritage practices in official and non-official spheres and engages with various cultural forms, from the living arts to museum displays, food culture, education, protest, commemorations and online/digital practice, among others. CoHERE is funded through Horizon 2020, and responds to the Reflective Societies programme.

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